

THE NORTHLAND SKY WATCHER



*For National Weather Service weather watchers of
northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin*

From Teletypes to AWIPS

Long-time NWS employee retires

Jim Christenson remembers taking weather observations with bombing in the distance and rats running underfoot at the far reaches of the airfield at Saigon during the Vietnam War. Back in the States, he's worked radar during some of Iowa's worst tornado outbreaks, and was the weatherman on duty during the infamous '72 flood in Duluth. He's issued warnings using the painstakingly slow teletype system of the 70's and the satellite-driven communication systems of the Weather Service of the 21st Century. He's been hunched over the grainy, green radar scopes of the old 74C and 57 radars in small, dark rooms, and interrogated rotating thunderstorms with the state-of-the-art Doppler radar. In his 30 years in the federal weather business, you could say that Jim has pretty much seen it all.

Jim, the Data Acquisition Program Manager at the National Weather Service Office in Duluth, will retire in April with more than 30 years of Federal Service. Jim has worked at the Duluth NWS office since 1982, with a two-year break at the Wichita, KS office from 1992 to 1994.



Jim Christenson, a long-time employee of the NWS in Duluth, will retire April 1 with 30 years of government service.

In this issue

<i>Retirement</i>	1
<i>Spring Floods</i>	2
<i>Free Radar</i>	2
<i>NOAA Weather Radio News</i>	3-4
<i>Skywarn Schedule</i>	4
<i>Co-op Corner</i>	5

Jim started in the weather business in the US Air Force. He spent seven years with the USAF, stationed at various bases. His most memorable stint was spent at Tan Son Nhut Airbase in the former republic of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. During the war he was dispatched by helicopter into the jungle to set up weather support stations. He finished his Air Force career at Duluth AFB.

Jim's National Weather Service career began as a Weather Service and Radar Specialist in January 1978 at Des Moines, IA. Other than the stint at the Wichita office, Jim spent the rest of his career at Duluth.

Continued on next page

continued from page 1

Jim plans on only a semi-retirement, as he has some part-time jobs lined up, with some teaching down the road. Jim is married to Carol, who is the Warning Coordination Meteorologist at WFO Duluth. They have two lovely girls, Anna-Marie, 11, and Carla Ann, 2. He expects to spend much of his time this summer on the lawn mower or in the garden, and if everything goes well there, on the golf course.

The highlight of his career has been the outstanding people he has worked with over the years, along with satisfaction that goes along with performing a valuable service to the public. Jim will certainly miss the many cooperative observers he has worked with over the years. He regards those dedicated people as the foundation upon which the National Weather Service functions.

We will miss Jim. His expertise in weather observing techniques is unsurpassed while his tales of the past have kept the office lively.



Spring Flood Outlook

This Spring's Snowmelt Flood Outlook calls for the potential for minor or no river flooding in both northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Minor flooding can be described as minimal or no property damage, but possibly some public inconvenience. This outlook was based on current streamflow, snow pack, and soil conditions, as well as normal temperature and precipitation for the remainder of the snowmelt season. Above normal conditions or ice jams may increase the threat for flooding. The outlook for April is for below normal temperatures and normal precipitation.

One reason for the potential of minor flooding is the near to above normal water content of our snow pack. Snow depths as of early March ranged from 20 to 40 inches near Lake Superior, to 15 to 25 inches across the rest the area. The water equivalent of this snow pack ranged from 4 to 8 inches near Lake Superior, to 3 to 5.5 inches across the rest of northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin.

The latest flood outlook, as well as other river information and forecasts, can be found on the hydrology section of our web site.

- Tracy Packingham, Hydrology Program Manager



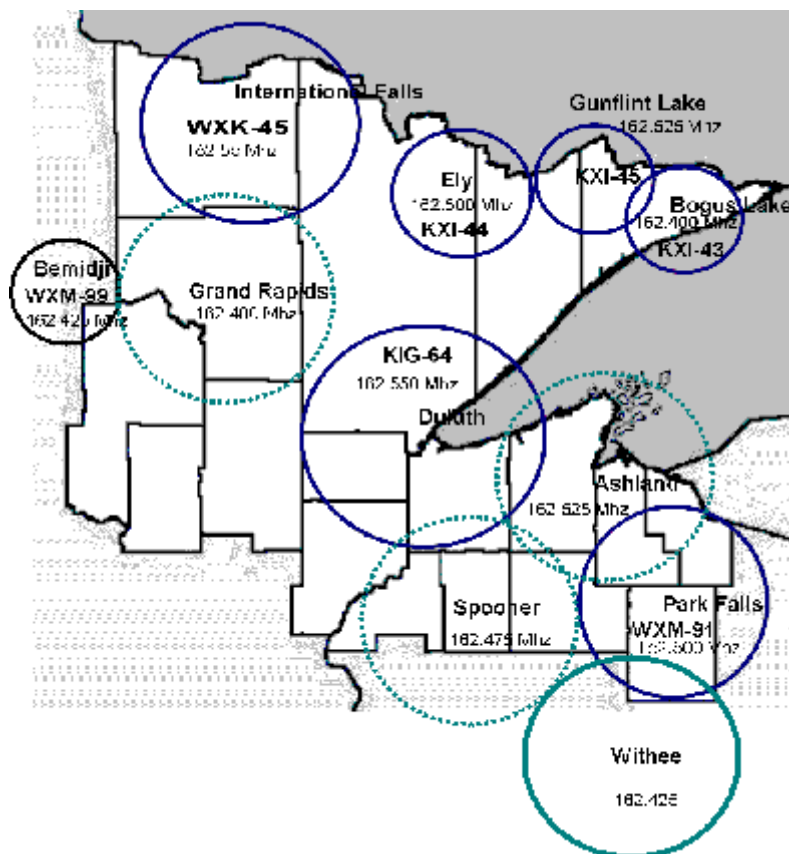
Free Radar Data!

In an effort to give access to weather radar data to anyone with an Internet connection, the National Weather Service switched to a new system that

distributes real-time radar weather data via their websites.

You can access the radar images for northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin on our website: www.crh.noaa.gov/dlh. Just click on the word "radar" on the side menu and you will see the latest radar image. Other features on the radar image page are an option for looping several images, and quick links to other radars across the country. The page also features a link called "radar information", which provides answers to all the questions you may have about radar imagery. We hope you find the information useful during the upcoming severe weather season and throughout the year.

- Dean Packingham, forecaster



NOAA Weather Radio coverage over northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Solid lines depict stations currently on the air, while the dashed lines depict stations that will be running by summer.

NOAA Weather Radio News

More Transmitters to be Operating Soon

Expect three more NOAA Weather Radio stations to be broadcasting 24 hours-a-day weather information to the Northland soon. The transmitter near Grand Rapids is slated to be installed in late March. This transmitter was funded by federal and county funds. The Wisconsin Educational Communications Board is installing two transmitters in northwestern Wisconsin- Spooner and Ashland. Both should be broadcasting by summer, maybe earlier.

Other sites in Minnesota are still being considered to receive transmitters. Watch *The Northland Sky Watcher* or our website for updates on NWR expansion.

Another Banner Year at the Boat Show!

Our booth at the 2001 Duluth Boat, Sport, and Travel Show was again quite a success, with just over a thousand people stopping by to chat with us. Our focus this year was "NOAA Weather Radio", and we were fortunate to have five new weather radios to give away at our drawing. Three of the weather radios were donated by Radio Shack Corporation, one was donated by Electric Odyssey, and another was donated by the National Weather Service in Duluth. We also donated 14 official rain gauges to several lucky recipients. This year's booth gave us a chance to showcase the benefits of the NOAA Weather Radio program, as well as to tout some new stations that will be operating within the next year or two.

We had a great time at the "Boat Show," and look forward to seeing everyone again at next year's show.

- Dean Packingham, boat show coordinator

No-uh Weh-thurr Rah-deo Weel Suhn Sahhnd Bet-her

Plans are underway to replace the computer-synthesized voice currently used on the NOAA Weather Radio System. The current computer-synthesized voice is a product of 6-year-old technology and will be replaced in response to user demands for a clearer, more human-sounding voice system. The new speech technologies under consideration incorporate actual human voices that only recently emerged on the commercial market last year. The Office of Science and Technology began upgrading this critical warning dissemination system with a call for proposals March 12 on the web at www.rdc.noaa.gov/~amd/90021.html. A debut of the new "voice of the National Weather Service" is expected in December 2001.

-From the on-line newsletter, "NWS Focus"

We Need Your Input!

NWR voice improvement is in a new and important phase. Please listen and comment on some of the possible new voices on the NWR voice evaluation web site at www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/voicesamples.htm. Everyone from NWS employees to warning partners to the public is encouraged to listen and send their comments. A link to this new page, as well as a new Voice Improvement Processor (VIP) status page, has been added to the NWR homepage at www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.html.

We encourage you to visit the web page early and to return often to obtain an updated status and comment on new possible voices as they appear, especially through the summer. Your input will be used in one of three types of evaluations. So log on, listen, and provide feedback!



2001 Skywarn Training Schedule

April 4, 6:30 pm	Orr Fire Hall
April 5, 6:30 pm	Brainerd Courthouse
April 10, 6:30 pm	Superior WITC
April 11, 6:30 pm	Mt. Iron, Nichols Town Hall
April 12, 7:00 pm	Hayward Courthouse
April 16, 2:00 pm	Phillips Courthouse
April 16, 6:30 pm	Park Falls Municipal Bldg.
April 17, 6:30 pm	Walker High School
April 18, 7:00 pm	Maple Town Hall
April 18, 7:00 pm	Solon Springs Town Hall
April 23, 6:30 pm	International Falls, Rainy River Community College
April 25, 6:30 pm	Aitkin County Courthouse
April 27, 7:00 pm	Grand Marais Community Center
May 8, 6:30 pm	Ashland WITC
May 16, 6:30 pm	Siren Gov't Center

Check our website for additions!



Did You know...?

...that storm spotters were first used during WWII to alert military artillery plants of approaching lightning?

...that after WWII spotter networks were maintained for military installations?

...that after the May 25, 1955 tornado in Udall, KS killed 80 people, the NWS decided to train their own severe weather spotters?

...that the first spotter training course was held March 8, 1959 in Wellington, KS for 225 weather spotters?

...that the Skywarn program was officially created in 1965?

Co-op Corner

The National Weather Service Honors the DNR at Orr for 75 Years of Service



Orr DNR Forester Dave Sopoci accepts the NWS' 75 Year Institutional Award from Meteorologist in Charge Mike Stewart.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources office at Orr, MN was presented the NWS's prestigious 75 Year Institutional Award on March 22, 2001. The award was given in appreciation for 75 years of uninterrupted reporting of precipitation data to the NWS. Meteorologist in Charge of the Duluth NWS Office, Michael Stewart, presented the award on behalf of the entire NWS.

The data gathered over the years from the DNR office is used by various federal and state agencies for agricultural, hydrological, and climate analysis studies. Their data can also be found in the *Climatological Data Bulletins* published by the NWS and available to the general public through the National Climatic Data Center.

Our thanks and congratulations go to the employees, past and present, for their dedication and cooperation in helping collect this vital information.

- Jim Christenson, Data Acquisition Program Manager

Co-op News

I have been asked about our new PC program, *Weather Coder*, that is used to send in observations. The good news is that we have it, but there are problems with it. Sometimes two screens will overlap. You can still enter the data if you can read the screen or you can exit the program and try again. The second problem is that you can not print a monthly form to send to us. We are working on these problems, but we can't tell you when there will be a fix to the program. Anyone that wants the program can have it, but you will have to fill out and send in your monthly form until the printing problem is solved.

We will be updating our records for each co-op site this year. We have a program which will let us add e-mail address and fax numbers to our files. If you have either one and would like us to add it to our records, please pass the information to me.

You can contact me by e-mail at daniel.markee@noaa.gov or give me a call. The easiest way might be to send a note with your form at the end of the month. You can also use my e-mail address to let me know if you are short on supplies or if you have equipment problems.

With severe weather right around the corner, please remember you can call us anytime of the day or night to report severe weather. You do us and the public a great service every time you call. Please call as soon as you observe hail, damaging winds, or tornadoes. Your reports might help save someone's life.

- Daniel Markee, Co-op Program Manager

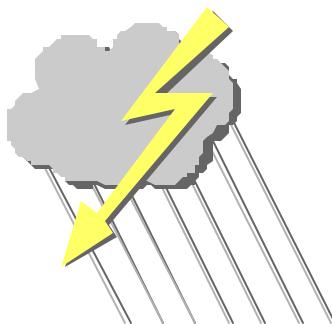
The *Northland Sky Watcher* is a newsletter published by the National Weather Service Office in Duluth, MN for our weather spotters and observers. We welcome your questions and comments. We can be reached by:

Phone: (218) 729-6697
(218) 283-4615 dialing from
International Falls

mail: 5027 Miller Trunk Hwy
Duluth, MN 55811

or e-mail to carol.christenson@noaa.gov

Visit our homepage on the internet at
www.crh.noaa.gov/dlh/duluth.htm



**Keep your
eyes on
the sky!**



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
5027 MILLER TRUNK HIGHWAY
DULUTH MN 55811-1442

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300